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PROGRESS REPORT ON THE AFRICAN INSTITUTE FOR HIGHER TECHNICAL TRAINING AND RESEARCH NAIROBI

I. Introduction

In the two reports on the African Institute for Higher Technical Training and Research which were presented to the MULPOC Council of Ministers in Lusaka (1981) and Mbabane (1982), progress towards getting the Institute fully operational was described as slow and difficult. The reason for this was reported as being the inadequacy of membership in the Institute and the insufficiency of Governments' contributions to its budget.

This third report will bring slightly more heartening news with regard to membership, member state contributions, programme activities, Governments' participation in the Institute's policy-making organs and steps towards greater efficiency in the financial and general management of the Institute.

A final section will look into programme prospects and thrust in the future and the way member States might wish to exploit the existence of this Institution to strengthen their industrial production capacities.

II. Membership

In 1982, the report on the Institute stated that

> "The Institute still lacks one last signature required by its Constitution to give it full legal status. This is probably the most fundamental problem plaguing the Institute's development."

Since that report, this hurdle has been jumped with the accession of Uganda to membership of the Institute last May. At that time, there were strong indications that at least two other Member Governments of this sub-region's MULPOC were favourably inclined to signing the Constitution. There is still hope that these two, and indeed other Governments of the East and Southern Africa Sub-region, will before long agree to sign the Institute's Constitution.

III. Contributions to the Institute's Budget and Programmes

The Principal financial supporters of the Institute's budget were Nigeria and the Host Government, Kenya. Last year they were joined by Zaire and this year by Liberia. There is an undertaking made by one Government of the Lusaka MULPOC sub-region to honour its financial obligations to the Institute. The OAU announced a pledge of US$ 10,000 to the budget, at the last meeting of the Institute's Governing Council which was held in Addis Ababa last May. ECA continues to support training through the provision of fellowships to the Institute's trainees.

Other contributions in kind and expert resources have been received from UNESCO and UNEP through the financing of consultancy services and the provision of lecturers and facilitators to the Institute's training activities.

IV. Programme Activities

Two training seminars were conducted during the period under review. The first, which lasted three months was on Environmental monitoring and measurement techniques. It was attended by twenty-three participants from eleven countries. The second training workshop which was organized in Kinshasa, Zaire, was run for francophone countries on Drinking water Treatment and Waterworks Management. It lasted 9 weeks and was attended by 10 practising water engineers and technicians from four francophone countries.

Training of engineers and high-level technicians is the raison-d'être of the Institute, but the current financial situation constrains the Institute's ability to fully provide this vital service to African Governments. The two courses which were organized during the period under review, were part of the "special diploma series" which are designed to provide short ad hoc courses on specific engineering areas. The normal training activities which would be provided on a continuous basis and for much longer periods of time, cannot yet be initiated because of the financial problems facing the Institute and their adverse affects on plans to recruit staff, develop physical infrastructure, provide training resources and develop training programmes. In fact, to date, the Institute has received over two thousand applications for training from African engineers, technicians and Managers, but has been able to train only about sixty African nationals. The demand for its services definitely exists, but it cannot respond to these demands for as long as African Governments delay in providing to it, the wherewithall to do so.

The Institute's research activities have been confined to the preparation of inputs to technical meetings on engineering, Science and technology. The Staff of the Institute participated in such meetings by preparing and delivering technical research papers on:

i) Science, Technology and Education Research in Africa (Nairobi)

ii) Industrial Energy management and Alternative Sources of Energy (Lusaka)

iii) Environmental Education and Training in the African Region (Nairobi)

Although it's research activities should emphasise applied engineering and scientific research the Institute is unable to develop these activities on account of the paucity of staff resources which is one result of its financial predicament.

V. Meetings of Policy-Making Organs

The Governing Council met in Nairobi in March last year and decided that its Executive Committee should meet the following May to approve the Institute's budget and work programme as well as make decisions on staffing questions and matters pertaining to the Institute's Management. With one exception, all members of the Executive Committee attended the meeting which was convened in Addis Ababa. Four out of the six members present were Ministers.

The decision was taken at that meeting, that in order to strengthen the Institute's programme delivery capacity, the Management of the Institute would have to be improved and that the Institute's training activities should be reinforced. A work programme reflecting the latter decision was approved and budget allocations were also approved accordingly.

Following the resignation of the then Director-General, the Executive Committee requested ECA to advertise the post and select suitable candidates for the Selection Committee's consideration. At the time of writing, the search for a new Director-General was still in process.

ECA was also requested to look into the financial Management of the Institute with a view to assisting management set up and operate a more efficient system. That task was completed in July 1983 by experts provided by ECA.

VI. Future Plans and Prospects

An important policy guide to future programme development is the need to manage the Institute's meagre resources with such efficiency that programme take-off will be facilitated. In this, emphasis will be placed on training of a type that will ensure a high degree of skills acquisition in production-oriented engineering areas. In observance of this policy, the Institute's first production oriented workshop is being planned for execution in one of the Lusaka MULPOC member States. A member Government has been approached on the proposal and negotiations are currently underway between that Government, ECA and the Institute on details for organising a training workshop in 1984 on the construction of electric motors. Training activities of this type bring very relevant contributions to African industrialization efforts and coincide with the objectives of the Industrial Development Decade for Africa. In fact the construction of electric motors happens to have been one of the several projects recommended for joint implementation within the framework of the IDDA, by the Second Meeting of the International Committee of Experts on Engineering Industries for East and Southern Africa which was held at Addis Ababa in September 1983. Other production areas in which the Institute intends to mount training activities in the future include the construction of pumps, cranes, transformers etc.

If the Institute's present financial problems persist, it will be extremely difficult for these planned activities to be properly and completely implemented, which means that a part of the manpower development component of the IDDA will not be fully provided for. Therefore for these and greater things to be done by the Institute, African Governments, including Governments in East and Southern African countries should strive to provide the financial, material, moral and political support which this African Institution needs to be functional in the Industrial transformation of this continent.